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REVIEW OF THE MULTIPLE APPLICATIONS PROJECT

August, 1984

Alberta
ADVANCED EDUCATION
PLANNING SECRETARIAT

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1. The purpose of this project is to develop a comprehensive plan for the future of the organization. This plan will be based on the current state of the organization and the needs of the future. The plan will be developed by a committee of representatives from all departments and will be presented to the Board of Directors for approval.

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STUDY OF MULTIPLE APPLICATIONS

I. Background

1. In May 1984 the Minister requested the institutions to co-operate with the Department in a study of multiple applications. The institutions were asked to provide applications data so that an analysis could be conducted to determine the number of multiple applications and the pattern of multiple applications between institutions.
2. The objective of the study was to obtain information which would assist the Minister and the Department to assess the level of demand for places in the post-secondary system in the fall of 1984. The study was to examine the impact of multiple applications on the relationship between application and eventual enrolments.
3. All of the institutions involved provided the required data in late June or early July. The data base for the study contained approximately 50,000 records of applications. A unique identifier was developed based on surname, given name, sex and birthdate of an applicant. Using this identifier applications made to different institutions by the same person could be matched and counted.

II. Results

1. The results of the study are provided in a separate report, Report on Multiple Applications, which will be made available to the institutions. The data indicate that:
 - approximately 12.4% of all applicants applied to more than one institution,
 - about 24% of all applications were multiple applications,
 - the proportion of applications which were multiple was highest at the universities, closely followed by NAIT and SAIT,
 - multiple applications were concentrated in Edmonton and Calgary

STUDY OF MULTIPLE APPLICATIONS

Background

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1. Institutions

All of the institutions involved provided the required data in late June 1984. The data base for the study contained approximately 50,000 records of applications. A unique identifier was developed based on personal details of the applicant. Using this identifier, applications were matched to institutions. This was done to ensure that each person's applications were correctly identified.

2. Results

The results of the study are provided in a separate report, Report on Multiple Applications, which will be made available to the institutions. The data indicate that:

- There are factors which can reduce the number of multiple applications.
- Approximately 15% of all applications applied to more than one institution.
- About 5% of all applications were multiple applications.
- The pattern of applications which were multiple was highest at the University of Alberta, followed by the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Manitoba.
- Multiple applications were concentrated in Edmonton and Calgary.

but were also clustered among institutions in the southern half of the province,

- the rate of multiple applications and the number of multiple applicants are not significantly affected by excluding applications from visa students and from out of province applicants.

2. Perhaps the key finding is that the number of persons who apply to more than one institution is smaller than many had anticipated. If applications made by Alberta residents are considered it is estimated that only about 4410 applicants, about 12.0% of the estimated 36,687 Alberta applicants, applied to more than one institution. The percentage of multiple applications is perhaps larger than has sometimes been thought but the number of actual multiple applicants who generate these multiple applications is relatively small.

III. Implications

A. Projecting Enrolments

1. There are limits to the usefulness of multiple applications data for projecting fall enrolments. The reason for this is the influence of other factors which may outweigh the impact of multiple applications.
2. Enrolments can be projected on the basis of applications data provided that the following factors are taken into account:
 - incomplete applications
 - unqualified applicants.

These two factors alone can result in a very considerable fall off rate. The university of Alberta experienced a 41.4% reduction in its application for new first places this year due to these two factors.

- the extent to which accepted applicants fail to register ("no-shows"). Typically this may range from between 10-15% of accepted applicants.

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Perhaps the key finding is that the number of persons who apply to more than one institution is relatively small. There were 1,111 multiple applications made by 449 persons. The percentage of multiple applications is 12.9% (the estimated 35,657 applicants, applied to more than one institution). The percentage of multiple applications is perhaps larger than has been reported elsewhere but the number of multiple applications is relatively small. The percentage of multiple applications is 12.9% (the estimated 35,657 applicants, applied to more than one institution).

III. Institutional Factors

A. Institutional factors influencing the number of multiple applications

1. The first finding is that the number of multiple applications for a particular institution is influenced by the number of other institutions in the province. The reason for this is the influence of other factors which are outside the scope of multiple applications.
2. Enrollment rates are positively related to the number of multiple applications. Enrollment rates are positively related to the number of multiple applications.
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9. The number of multiple applications is positively related to the number of multiple applications.
10. The number of multiple applications is positively related to the number of multiple applications.

The impact of multiple applications, if it is experienced at all by the institutions, occurs at this point. That is, where an applicant applies to and is accepted by more than one institution and then fails to take up a place at his second choice institution; thus becoming a "no-show".

3. Two points should be noted:

- in translating applications into eventual enrolments the impact of incomplete and failed applications is much larger than the impact of multiple applications at both the system wide and at the institutional level,
- data are not available to estimate the extent to which multiple applicants are a factor in contributing to the "no-show" rate. Some multiple applicants will not complete both of their applications. Others will not be accepted by more than one institution. Some multiple applicants will turn down an offer at their second choice institution prior to registration. Other factors play a part in influencing the number of "no-shows" (ie. prospective students deciding to travel, obtaining employment, moving to a different province etc.).

B. Central Registry Systems

1. A central registry system along the lines of the Ontario system, prevents applicants from holding more than one letter of acceptance at a time. Such a system becomes critical if it is clear that due to multiple applications some applicants are being accepted at more than one institution and that places cannot be matched with qualified applicants. That is, some places go unfilled, or are only filled at the last moment, because institutions have a lot of "no shows". The data from the study cannot indicate if this is occurring in Alberta to a significant degree. However given the reasonably low number of multiple applicants (about 12%), not all of whom will be successful in their applications, it appears unlikely that multiple applications are a serious problem in creating unfilled places which the institutions have to scramble to fill in the immediate post-registration period.

The impact of multiple applications, if it is exacerbated as all by the institutions, occurs at this point. That is, where an applicant applies to and is accepted by more than one institution and then fails to take up a place at his second choice institution, this becomes a "no-show".

2. Two points should be noted:
a. In the case of multiple applications, the impact of incomplete and failed applications is much larger than the impact of multiple applications at both the system wide and at the institutional level.
b. Data are not available to estimate the extent to which multiple applicants are a factor in contributing to the "no-show" rate. Some multiple applicants will not complete both of their applications. Others will not be accepted by more than one institution. Some multiple applicants will turn down an offer at their second choice institution prior to registration. Other factors also may be influencing the number of "no-shows" (e.g. prospective students deciding to travel, obtaining employment, moving to a different province etc.).

B. Central Registry System

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2. The impact of multiple applications is much larger than the impact of multiple applications at both the system wide and at the institutional level. Data are not available to estimate the extent to which multiple applicants are a factor in contributing to the "no-show" rate. Some multiple applicants will not complete both of their applications. Others will not be accepted by more than one institution. Some multiple applicants will turn down an offer at their second choice institution prior to registration. Other factors also may be influencing the number of "no-shows" (e.g. prospective students deciding to travel, obtaining employment, moving to a different province etc.).

2. Other procedures can be used and are being used by some Alberta institutions to address the problem of "no-shows" and multiple acceptances of places. The universities routinely require applicants to high demand quota programs to indicate in writing their acceptance of place well before the date of registration. Concordia College is requiring applicants to indicate their acceptance of a place in writing and to make an advance payment of a portion of their tuition as a deposit.
3. A central registry system would almost certainly increase the number of multiple applications through its use of a common application form. Applying to more than one institution would be made easier than it is at present.

C. Reporting Applications

1. The study was designed to determine the number of applicants who were seeking new first year places at the institutions. In order to achieve this applications from the following categories of students had to be excluded:
 - applications from the same individual to more than one program at the same institution,
 - applications made by continuing students seeking to change programs at the same institution,
2. It has become clear that the application figures used by institutions to measure the demand for programs can be potentially misleading. A large number of applications do not result in actual enrolments. A further problem, however, is the tendency of some institutions to lump all applications together without distinguishing between applications from new students and those from continuing students seeking a program change. A more serious difficulty occurs when institutions also fail to draw a distinction between the number of applicants seeking to enrol and the number of applications they have received from those applicants. Multiple applications within an institution seem to be as significant, in many instances, as multiple applications between institutions.

5. Other procedures can be used and are being used by some institutions to address the problem of "no-shows" and multiple applications of places. The university routinely requires applicants to sign a demand note program to indicate in writing their acceptance of a place with before the date of registration. Concordia College is requiring applicants to indicate their acceptance of a place in writing and to make an advance payment of a portion of their tuition as a deposit.

6. A central registry system would almost certainly increase the number of multiple applications, through its use of a common application form. Applying to more than one institution would be made easier than it is at present.

2. Worsening Applications

7. The study was designed to estimate the number of applicants who are seeking new first-year places at the institutions. In order to estimate this application figure, the following categories of students had to be excluded:

8. Applications from the same individual to more than one program at the same institution.

9. Applications made by continuing students seeking to change programs at the same institution.

10. Applications from the same institution for the same year.

11. The study was designed to estimate the application figures used by institutions to measure the demand for programs can be potentially misleading. A large number of applications are received by institutions in actual enrollment. A further problem, however, is the tendency of some institutions to keep all applications together without distinguishing between applications from new students and those from continuing students seeking a program change. A more serious difficulty occurs when institutions also fail to draw a distinction between the number of applicants who have applied to and been accepted by the institution and the number of applicants who have been accepted by the institution but have not yet indicated their intention to enroll. Institutions which do not distinguish between these two categories of applicants, or multiple applications between institutions.

3. Institutions would be better able to assess the demand for their programs if they monitored more closely the number of applicants who are applying. Once this is known the adjustments needed to account for incomplete and failed applications and "no-shows" can be made. That is, multiple applicants internal to an institution would not be double counted.*

IV. Benefits

1. The study has provided for the first time what is believed to be a reasonably accurate picture of the number and pattern of multiple applications and applicants in the system. This information will be of assistance to the institutions in examining applications and enrolments. The information will help the Department in the future to better assess data on applications.
2. Additional information will eventually be available from the study on the age, sex, past education and location of applicants to different institutions and programs.

V. Conclusions

1. Data was successfully obtained on fall 1984 applications. There is probably no need, however, to replicate the study in 1985. The University of Alberta quota issue has been resolved. The existing data will provide background information for the analysis of future application data provided by the institutions.
2. The forecasting of fall enrolments would be improved if the institutions could be encouraged to focus their attention on the number of applicants

* When data was obtained from the institutions they were asked to provide one record per applicant. This resulted, in some instances, in a significant reduction in the number of applications provided. The total number of records provided was sometimes much lower than application numbers being reported to the Department, and in some cases, to the media.

they have for new places rather than on the overall number of applications they have received. This would enable the institutions to make more accurate forecasts of their enrolments and to plan accordingly.

3. During the current period of increasing enrolments and high levels of applications it might be useful for more institutions to consider requiring accepted students to indicate their commitment to enter their program. If this is done well before registration it would enable institutions to offer places to applicants who are on a waiting list. A more systematic approach to acceptance letters would deal directly with any problems which may be caused by "no-shows" (including those which may be caused by multiple applications) and would help ensure that all available places are made available to qualified applicants.
4. The data on multiple applicants and applications does not support the need for a central registry system for applications.



they have for the places rather than on the overall number of applications they have received. This would enable the institutions to make more accurate forecasts of their requirements and to plan accordingly.

3. During the current period of increasing enrolments and high levels of applications it might be useful for more institutions to consider recruiting accepted students to indicate their commitment to enter their program. If this is done well before registration it would enable institutions to offer places to applicants who are on a waiting list. A more systematic approach to acceptance factors would deal directly with any problems which may be caused by "no-shows" (including those which may be caused by multiple applications) and would help ensure that all available places are made available to qualified applicants.

4. The data on multiple applicants and applications does not support the need for a central registry system for applications.